



February 10, 2017

Members of our Anoka-Hennepin community,

Many years ago, I learned one of the most valuable lessons of my life with regard to communication. When a person tells you how they feel, there is no point in arguing with them that they shouldn't feel that way. The most effective way to address those concerns is to acknowledge them. Today, that lesson is as relevant as it has ever been.

Over the past few weeks families have shared that their students are feeling uneasy, afraid to come to school, afraid to leave their families. While these families are not concerned about our staff response to specific incidents, they are wanting reassurance that we will continue to vigilantly support their children. I can't imagine the anguish for any parent seeing their children feeling so anxious and wanting some reassurance.

As an organization that values proactive communication and ensuring safe and welcoming schools, we're committed to our district mission of *effectively educating each of our students for success*. In pursuit of this goal we acknowledge that success for all learners is only possible when all students feel safe at school.

Our schools are committed to School Board policy 413.0: Harassment, Violence and Discrimination. This policy states that the district shall "maintain a learning and working environment that is free from harassment, violence or discrimination based on actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex/gender, marital status, familial status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, age, family care leave status or veteran status."

Our goal of maintaining safe and welcoming environments is strengthened by our approach to support the whole student, including their emotional and mental health needs. Our systems of support include highly-trained and effective caring adults.

Staff members, please be alert to students who may be anxious or overwhelmed. Our back to school message was that the "little things" make the biggest difference to students. This is the time to shower students with those "little things."

Parents, please know that our commitment to safe and welcoming schools has not wavered. We will work tirelessly to ensure every student feels comfortable at school and supported throughout the day.

The strength of our society is our ability to work together during the most challenging times. We are a very strong community, committed to our students. I am confident that we can work through these issues that confront us now to create a better future.

Sincerely,

David Law
Superintendent

SCHOOL BOARD